

Message Text

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SUBJECT: ISSUES FOR MEETING OF US-USSR JOINT COMMERCIAL
COMMISSION - BUSINESS FACILITIES (CUSTOMS CHARGES)

REF: MOSCOW 6973

1. IN REFTTEL, EMBASSY NOTED COMPLAINTS OF SOME ACCREDITED COMPANIES (NOTABLY AMERICAN EXPRESS) OVER SOVIET CUSTOMS PROCEDURES, PARTICULARLY APPARENTLY ARBITRARY METHODS USED BY SOVIET CUSTOMS OFFICIALS IN DETERMINING DUTIES.

2. REPRESENTATIVES OF FIRST NATIONAL CITY BANK AND GENERAL ELECTRIC HAVE NOW ASKED THAT U.S. SIDE MAKE PARTICULAR POINT OF CUSTOMS PROBLEMS AT JOINT COMMISSION MEETING, STRESSING:

A) COMPANIES UNABLE DETERMINE IN ADVANCE WHAT CUSTOMS DUTIES WILL BE APPLIED;

B) EFFORTS TO OBTAIN SOVIET CUSTOMS CODE HAVE BEEN UNIVER-SALLY UNSUCCESSFUL;

C) RATES CHARGED ARE OFTEN ABSURDLY HIGH (SEE CASE CITED BELOW);

D) THERE IS NO WAY OF DETERMING WHAT IMPORTS ARE PROHIBITED. STANDARD SHOULD BE AVAILABILITY OF ITEM IN QUESTION ON SOVIET MARKET.

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3. IN SUPPORT OF HIS PROPOSAL, CITY BANK REP ADVISED EMBOFF THAT SOVIET CUSTOMS HAD RECENTLY ASSESSED DUTY OF 37 RUBLES ON TWO SIDE-VIEW AUTOMOBILE MIRRORS PURCHASED IN HELSINKI WHICH COST APPROXIMATELY \$5.00 EACH. THESE ITEMS NOT AVAILABLE IN MOSCOW, EVEN FOR SOVIET-MADE VEHICLES.

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY ENDORSES PROPOSAL OF BUSINESS REPS. CLEARLY, ARBITRARY ACTIONS OF SOVIET CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES REPRESENT BURDEN FOR COMPANIES' OPERATIONS HERE AND, AT VERY LEAST, SOVIETS CAN BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE COMPANIES WITH LISTING OF CUSTOMS DUTIES. RIDICULOUSLY HIGH CHARGES IN SOME CASES (SUCH AS MIRRORS) SHOULD ALSO BE CITED AS UNNECESSARY OBSTACLE TO OPERATIONS OF ACCREDITED FIRMS.
STOESSEL

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